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Instructor Literature Series—No. 125

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STORIES OF THE STATES

By Louise W. Mears, A. M.



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- *233 Poems Worth Knowing—Book I—Primary

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(Continued on Third Cover Page)

INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES

The Story of Nebraska

(The Tree Planter's State)

BY

Louise W. Mears, A. M.

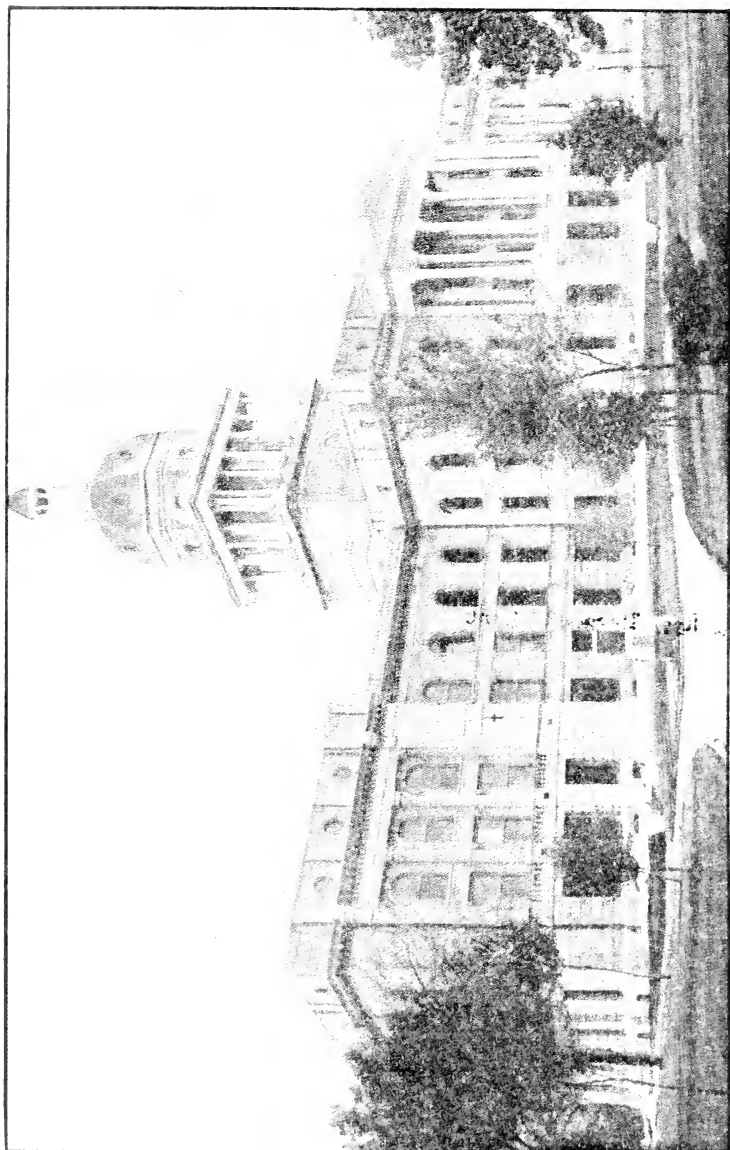
Formerly Teacher of Geography in the Peru (Neb.) State
Normal School; Author of "The Hills of Peru."

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State Capitol at Lincoln

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Hymn to Nebraska

Now laud the proud tree planter state,
Nebraska,—free, enlightened, great;
Her royal place she has in song;
The noblest strains to her belong;

Her fame is sure.
Then sing Nebraska through the years;
Extol her stalwart pioneers;
The days when, staunch and unafraid,
The state's foundations well they laid,
To long endure.

The land where Coronado trod,
And brave Marquette surveyed the sod;
Where Red Men long in council sat;
Where spread the valleys of the Platte
Far 'neath the sun.

The land, beside whose borders sweep
The big Missouri's waters deep,
Whose course erratic, through its sands,
From northland on, through many lands,
Does seaward run.

The foothills of the Rockies lie
Afar athwart her western sky:
Her rolling prairie, like the sea,
Held long in virgin sanctity

Her fertile loam.
Her wild-life roamed o'er treeless plains,
Till came the toiling wagon-trains;
And settlers bold, far westward bound,
In broad Nebraska's valleys found
Their chosen home.

Now o'er her realm and 'neath her sky
Her golden harvests richly lie;—
Her corn more vast than Egypt yields,
Her grain unmatched in other fields,
Her cattle rare;
Alfalfa fields, by winding streams,
And sunsets, thrilling poets' dreams;—
These all we sing, and know that time
Has ne'er revealed a fairer clime,
Or sweeter air.

O proud Nebraska, brave and free;
Thus sings thy populace to thee.
Thy virile strength, thy love of light,
Thy civic glory, joined with right,
Our hearts elate.
Thy manly wisdom, firm to rule,
Thy womanhood in church and school,
Thy learning, culture, art and peace,
Do make thee strong, and ne'er shall cease
To keep thee great!

—*Rev W. H. Buss.*

Note: A prize of \$100 was awarded to the author, a resident of Fremont, Neb., by a special committee to select an ode to be sung at celebrations of Nebraska's semi-centennial anniversary.

The Story of Nebraska

Nebraska is a state of homes. Its settlement has been of such a nature that it has not experienced the changes of a shifting or transient population. Scenic wonders or climatic extremes have not attracted to it a seasonal population. Its rich soils, abundant pure water supply and bright skies say to the homeseeker that here the greatest of blessings, labor, will bring wealth to the possessor. Its State University, located at Lincoln, claims the highest per cent of students from its own state among institutions of its kind. Ninety-five per cent of its students are from Nebraska. This fact gives emphasis to the statement that Nebraska is a state of homes. It has long stood first in the Union as the lowest in per cent of illiteracy. Only 1.9 per cent of its population over ten years old were illiterate at the last census. (1910).

Nebraska was admitted to statehood in 1867, the same year that Alaska was purchased from Russia. This coincidence furnishes a strong contrast for study. Alaska, an important possession of empire dimensions, partly because the Klondike boom was the reason for its influx of population and partly because of its high altitude and latitude, has had a shifting and even decreasing population. In contrast to Alaska with its scenic wonders, Nebraska has a population whose roots are planted in its all-abiding soil. Nebraska has more than fifty kinds of soil, found in the three provinces known as Loess, Sand Hill, and High Plains Regions. The Loess soil area, estimated at more than 37,000 square

miles, belongs to the kind that is regarded as the most productive in the world. (1915 Blue Book.)

In contrast with a rugged state like Pennsylvania, Nebraska has no physical barriers. For this reason there have not been sectional differences along social or other lines. It is usually thought of as an agricultural prairie state. It is in fact one of the most important agricultural states in the Union, having, in 1910, 129,678 farms.

Students of geographical influences think they have found along the fortieth parallel of latitude that happy mean of physical conditions that favors the growth of population centers. They give a long list of cities to prove this fact, naming such centers as Constantinople, Peking, Rome, New York City, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, and Kansas City. Nebraska is on the fortieth parallel of latitude, in this belt of mean climatic conditions, and its young, thriving cities of Omaha, the metropolis, and Lincoln, its capital city, are no exceptions to the theory. Nebraska is, moreover, in the geographical center of the United States.

While it is true that the state has no physical barriers to speak of, it can be separated for convenience of study into a number of natural regions. The eastern part of the state is prairie, while in the western part are high plains. The lowest part is in Richardson County, in the southeastern corner of the state, being less than 850 feet above the sea. The highest part is in Banner and Kimball counties, over 5000 feet in altitude. The change from prairie to plain in central Nebraska marks no change in the form of the land, but does make a change in climatic conditions. What is a prairie? This question Brigham, the geographer, answers by saying that the name prairie especially denotes a flat country, nearly forestless, but well-watered

enough for agriculture. On the other hand, the High Plains really deserve the name of plateau. Upon them the grasses thrive under scant rainfall.

There are four rather distinct physical regions. They are the Loess Region, covering slightly more than the southeast half of the state; the Sand Hills, stretching across the central and west-central part; the High Plains, known as the short grass country, increasing in height in the western part of the state; and the Bad Lands, an extension of the Dakota Bad Lands, of about 1000 square miles. A railroad journey westward across Nebraska on a summer's day gives the traveler a pleasant change from the heat, in which the corn thrives, to the bracing dry air of the ranch country. With scarcely a perceptible change to the eye, the traveler has been lifted from an altitude of 1000 feet to that of 5000 feet, in twelve hours.

The soil of the Loess country is wonderfully fertile, deep and easily tilled. The interesting history of its origin in Nebraska, and in other parts of the world,

would easily fill a book. One needs no longer to study the famed Loess hills of China. He can find them here in Nebraska. These are the compact, fine-grained, clay hills and ridges in eastern Nebraska. So compact is the soil that the early



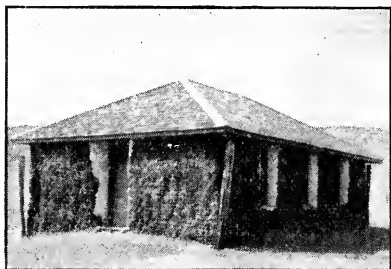
Sod Schoolhouse, Western Nebraska

pioneers often made good wells, fifty or sixty feet deep, with almost no brick facing. Cave-cellars, dug many years ago, without bricking or cementing, are still intact. The soil of the Sand Hill country is fine-grained,

wind-blown sand, for the most part not adapted to farm crops. While the soil of the High Plains is largely sandy and alkaline, it is usually fertile and readily tilled.

Sod Houses

It is in the High Plains and Sand Hill country that we find that interesting form of shelter, the sod house, including every variation in construction that the homesteader and the rancher can devise. The "soddy," usually in modified form, is still in use and is likely to be for some time to come, in north-western and western counties where timber



Sod Schoolhouse, Western Nebraska

is scarce, or transportation facilities are poor. It serves both as a country school house and as a dwelling. Some houses are entirely of sod and a few saplings, while others have a shingled roof and wooden window and door casings. The matted, tough roots of the prairie grass form a durable sod, and the blocks are cut large enough to make the wall stable. The scant rainfall leaves the structure intact, and the house may stand for many years. While the sod house is a rude and humble dwelling, it affords wholesome hospitality to the traveler on the treeless plains, and is often occupied as a matter of preference because of its perfect adaptation to the extremes of weather.

Discovery of Nebraska

In every history of the United States mention is made of that intrepid Spanish soldier, Coronado, who,

in 1541, traveled northeastward from Mexico for hundreds of miles in search of the reputed gold and silver in the Seven Cities of Cibola. Could we but know the northern limit of his remarkable journey across the desert plains, we should possess an interesting fact that affects our story of the discovery of Nebraska. In his own records Coronado says that he reached the 40th parallel. His favorable description of the country in its bloom, as he saw it, is entirely fitting for Nebraska. He was perhaps on the South Fork of the Platte, the first white man to hunt buffalo on these plains; but as to whether on the plains of Kansas or of Nebraska, historians differ. If this Spanish explorer and his cruel band set foot upon the state, and white men first entered from the southwest instead of from the east, there is a touch of romance added to its very early history that resembles the Spanish search for the Fountain of Youth. The discovery of Nebraska would then have been more than sixty years before the settlement of Jamestown. But the advent of Coronado would have had no effect upon the development of our State. The settlers were to come from the east.

Indian Names in Nebraska

Nebraska, like most of the states in the Union, has come in for its share of euphonious Indian names, such as Nebraska (*Flat water*), and Omaha (*Upstream*). Beside the Indian names, there are the translated names, such as Weeping Water, Lodge Pole and Long Pine. Both the translated and the untranslated names have been much mutilated and misunderstood, in their transfer from a people without a written language to a frontier class of adventurers, hunters and tradesmen. Now that we are coming to value more the beauties and the significance of the Indian languages, we regret

this unavoidable corruption of place-names. The substitution of European names for the Indian names has been a distinct loss to science. The naturalist might learn through the medium of the Indian names the habitat of native plants and animals, and the physical features of the country.

Melvin R. Gilmore of the Nebraska State Historical Society, says:—"Nebraska contained, either partially or wholly within its borders, the following tribes: In the northwest were the Teton Dakota; along the north, on the lower course of the Niobrara River, southward to the Platte River, were the Omaha; south of the Platte, in the southeast, were the Oto; next to these were the Iowa, partly on the east side of the Missouri River, in what is now the state of Iowa, and partly west of the Missouri in what is now the extreme southeast part of Nebraska; south of the Oto were the Kansa, from which tribe the state of Kansas is named. The Kansa domain was only a little way within what is now the south boundary of Nebraska. All of these tribes are of Siouan stock, hence their languages are cognate although mutually unintelligible. In the middle part of the state lay the domain of the Pawnee. This was a nation consisting of four tribes of the Caddoan stock. Their language is of a different structure and of different sounds. In southwest Nebraska and eastern Colorado were the Cheyenne and the Arapahoe, two tribes of the great Algonquin linguistic stock.

NOTE:—"The "Arrow," a paper published in Omaha in territorial days, protests against "newfangled names" in this wise: "Point out if you can anywhere in the English language any names more musical, or more appropriate to our territory than these which exist amongst the Indian tribes, or have been affixed by old frontiersmen. And so it is all over the territory; city and town sites, rivers and creeks have with few exceptions lost these beautiful and original names which oftentimes lend an air of enchantment and pleasure to a place." (See also Washington Irving's *Astoria*, page 223.)

Each tribe had its own names for all the region with which it was acquainted. Thus it will happen that any given stream, lake, or hill may have six or seven different names among as many different tribes. It may be that the same notable feature is the motive of the name by which a place is called by two or more tribes, but as the languages differ, the names will be quite different in form. There are no less than two hundred Indian languages of more than fifty linguistic stocks within the bounds of the United States. It is therefore inconsistent to speak of the 'Indian language.' "

The Meaning of Some Indian Names in Nebraska

(By M. R. Gilmore)

NAME	LANGUAGE	MEANING
Keha Paha	Dakota	Turtle Hill
Leshara	Pawnee	a chief
Minichaduza	Dakota	swift water
Nebraska	Omaha	flat water (The Omaha name for the Platte.)
Nehawka	Oto and Omaha	weeping creek
Niobrara	Omaha	spreading river (It widens over sandbars in its lower course.)
Omaha	Omaha	upstream
Dakota	Dakota	leagued
Loup	the French translation for Wolf, the Wolf tribe of the Pawnee.	
Missouri	the name given by the French, as they learned it from the Illinois, to a Siouan tribe on the lower course of a river now called Missouri. The Omaha called it the Smoke River; the Dakota, the Muddy Water; the Pawnee, Wonderful Water.	

Traders

In 1805, Manuel Lisa, a wealthy Spaniard, with a party in search of trading grounds, reached the lands north of the Platte and founded the first known settlement, on the site of what is now Bellevue. The name was doubtless given because of the beauty of the scenery. In 1810, the American Fur Company, that monster monopoly under control of John Jacob Astor, established a post at Bellevue. To this place the Indians for hundreds of miles around brought their furs. The hundredth anniversary of the establishment of this fur-trading post was celebrated at Bellevue in 1910, and a monument was there dedicated.

Gateways

Most states have a front door, or gateway, so to speak. The location of this entrance has determined in a large measure the development of the state in its pioneer period. Nebraska's gateway was on the east. It was unlike its sister state of Iowa, with a large navigable stream at the front and the rear entrance. The same mighty Missouri, navigable as far as Fort Benton, Montana, flowed by Nebraska's front and Iowa's rear door. It brought settlers to both states, and the population of Nebraska is still found in largest numbers within a hundred miles of the river. The long streams crossing the state from west to east indicate the paths traveled by the homeseekers and the gold-seekers, who came across the Missouri in ferry-boats, steamboats and skiffs. Long before the time of the homeseeker's coming, these streams had admitted such explorers as Major Long and others (1819) into the country. His was the first exploring expedition to ascend the Platte from its mouth to the confluence of the two forks. He traversed the main Platte through-

out its entire length, and the South Fork to the mountains. Col. Fremont describes the Big Blue as a "clear and handsome stream, about 120 feet wide, running with a rapid current through a well-timbered valley." On the occasion of Fremont's explorations (1842), Kit Carson was a most interesting and important member of the party.

These river-paths leading across the state not only furnished water-highways for the homeseekers, but, what was better still, they afforded fine open valleys for lines of easy travel. The buffalo and Indian trails were supplanted by the deeply rutted roads of the ox-cart and the freight wagon, and lastly by the railroad. The Union Pacific followed the Platte River, and took advantage of an easy grade and natural road-bed. The Chicago Northwestern lies largely in the valleys of the Elkhorn and the Niobrara, while the Burlington follows the Republican River system.

On account of its central location, Nebraska became from the first a crossing ground for fur traders, explorers, Mormons and gold-seekers. Bands of gold-seekers crossed the Missouri at Old Fort Kearney (now Nebraska City), at Plattsmouth, at Bellevue, and at Omaha. Even at crossings farther south they entered, as at St. Deroi, Brownville, and Peru. "Another great stream of people flowed from the southeast, striking the Platte at (new) Fort Kearney. In 1850, a military road was established, leading from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Fort Kearney on the Platte. It was very clear now to the vision of all who had seen its rich prairies that it was only a question of time—and a brief time, too—when emigrants would cross the Missouri in an irresistible wave and spread widely over the fertile plains beyond. The Government made haste to purchase the remainder of its territory from the Indians."

Steamboats were busily plying the Missouri River as early as 1856. The river towns were soon in their prime. Fifty-four "packets" were making regular trips. Brownville, the picturesque old county seat of Nemaha County, doomed to decadence, frequently had as many as a half dozen steamers at its wharf at one time.

Fossils of Nebraska

Of late much is being said and written concerning the fossils of western Nebraska. In fact, Sioux County is said to be one of the valuable fossil beds of the world. "A single specimen of the giant hog found on James Henry Cook's ranch, and now in possession of the University of Nebraska Museum, is valued at \$50,000." The only specimens of the kind said to have been found in the world are the two taken from this ranch. Here also Prof. Barbour discovered the ancestor of the modern horse. Countless bones of prehistoric rhinoceroses, and of ancestors of the cat and the lion are found scattered through the bone field. The Cook ranch is located in southern Sioux County, close to the Wyoming line. It comprises about 18,000 acres, with the Niobrara River running through it. As the river has cut a valley, it has laid bare two conspicuous hills, the bases of which are full of bones. They are University Hill, named in honor of the University of Nebraska, and Carnegie Hill, named for the Carnegie Museum. Bone layers are found varying in thickness from a few inches to a couple of feet, where the bones are piled together like corn in a crib. If one can conceive of a pile of petrified corn, he can picture the bone layers.

The theory which attempts to account for the vast assemblage of skeletons in this particular area is an interesting one. It is supposed that the presence of a lake, or deep river, made conditions possible whereby

the bodies of these thousands of animals might be floated and dropped, and then covered with a great thickness of rock. The most distinguished paleontologists devote their summers to work in these quarries. The fossil elephants are described in a report by Prof. E. H. Barbour, December 14, 1914. He says that these prehistoric elephants must have roamed the state in great herds. Six or eight species of mastodons and four of mammoths are already known to Nebraska. Mammoth bones occur throughout the entire state. "It is thought primitive man, with his prowess and cunning, had something to do with the extermination of the American mastodon. That man and the mammoths were contemporary is evidenced by drawings incised with flint upon the walls of caves and upon the tusks of mammoths. The mammoths were true elephants. The Imperial stood thirteen and one-half feet high. Its tusks were twelve to thirteen feet in length, and the longest of them exceeded sixteen feet. Each must have weighed about a thousand pounds."

In Territorial Days

Nebraska was a part of the Louisiana Province, first under French dominion (1682); then Spanish (1763); and once more under French dominion (1801) before it finally became a possession of the United States (1803), as a part of the Louisiana Purchase.

Lewis and Clark explored eastern Nebraska when on their expedition to discover the sources and course of the Missouri. The diary kept by these men is a delightful description of the valley in its virgin beauty. Like those of Coronado, the accounts tell of the abundance of wild fruit, especially the plum and the cherry, the tall grasses higher than a man's head, and the variety of game. The explorers entered the mouths of

tributary streams, such as the Nemaha, Platte and Niobrara. They wished to hold meetings with the Indians who were hunting on the prairies. From a page in the diary of Lewis and Clark, dated August, 1804, we read of their meeting with the Otoes, who arrived with six chiefs, assembled under an awning of the mainsail, and paraded for the occasion. A speech was then made to them, announcing the change of government, with promises of protection and advice as to their future conduct. All the six chiefs replied to the speech, each in his turn according to rank. They expressed their joy at the change in government. The place where this meeting occurred was named Council Bluffs, of which the diary says, "the situation of it is exceedingly favorable for a fort and trading factory. It is also central to the chief resorts of the Indians."

As changes were made in the boundaries of the lands west of the Mississippi from time to time, Nebraska was included with different areas, such as the Louisiana Territory, with St. Louis as the capital (1805); and the Missouri Territory (1812); while in 1834 it was called by act of Congress, what it really had been all the time—"Indian country." When Nebraska Territory was formed in 1854, it extended from the 40th parallel, its present boundary on the south, to Canada on the north, and westward to the Rockies.

It will be remembered that Nebraska, according to the famous Missouri Compromise of 1820, was to be spared the ordeal of the struggle over slavery. But how far from permanent the provision for free soil was, may be read in the many pages of American history devoted to the debates and the final undoing of the Compromise by the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (1854). The period of squatter sovereignty interests us here chiefly because of its important influence upon the settlement

of Nebraska. Settlers came pouring in from the East to swell the number of pro-slavery as well as anti-slavery supporters. Life in Nebraska took on a different tone, and foundations were laid for the future prosperity of the state. Civil war existed in the neighboring territory of Kansas, where the question of slavery was bitterly contested. In these days John Brown traveled through southeastern Nebraska. He had zealous adherents at Peru, which was one of the Underground Railroad towns. "He made frequent visits to the place, on one trip bringing with him fourteen fugitives." Brownville was the scene of even greater activity, due to the crossing of pro-slavery men from Missouri and anti-slavery men bound for Kansas. The border ruffians, the Missouri guerillas and the Kansas jayhawkers were all hurrying across the border lines.

Buffalo Bill

Since the history, and perhaps the geography, of a region are often best learned through biography, we can find no character that reveals more perfectly the early history of Western Nebraska than the eventful career of the most picturesque of plainsmen, Colonel Wm. F. Cody, known to the world as Buffalo Bill. In his interesting career we learn of that time when buffaloes and Indians roamed over the country where no white man had a home; when the traveler crossing the plains in the prairie schooner, the stage-coach, or on horseback, depended upon the buffalo or the deer for his food; when he must prepare at a moment's notice for Indian surprises, stage robbers, floods or prairies fires. Much of this very thrilling part of American history has been depicted in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which found favor in all parts of Europe, as well as in America.

While Buffalo Bill's birthplace is in Scott Co., Iowa, Nebraska claims him, for a number of reasons. North Platte, Nebraska, was long one of his homes, and "Scout's Rest," his ranch at North Platte, was used as a haven for his recuperating show animals. He was born in 1846, at a time when the plains were using men of his type. The discovery of gold in California had caused men to turn their desires toward a region removed by several thousand miles from the civilization of the eastern part of the United States. Great plains, "The Great American Desert," mountains and salt seas were not sufficient barriers to stem the rush of gold-seekers.

Buffalo Bill's father started in the rush for gold, but like many another person he changed his mind, and looked for a place to settle in a frontier state. He settled near Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and later in Salt Creek Valley in that state, which was on the line of one or two trails "that stretched for two thousand miles or more across this waste of plain and mountain, to California." The family experienced all the hardships of border warfare incident to the disputes over slavery, and the father, as an Abolitionist, was threatened with death repeatedly. He died of an illness when Buffalo Bill was eleven years old.

Beginning at this point in the biography, one may read the history of the pioneer period of Western Nebraska. It was at this time, in 1857, that the eleven year old boy was engaged to help drive beef-cattle to Salt Lake City for General Albert Sydney Johnston's



Colonel Wm. F. Cody
"Buffalo Bill"

army, which was then being sent against the Mormons. And it was on this expedition that the boy shot and killed his first Indian.

In 1867, General Sheridan appointed Buffalo Bill as guide and chief of scouts for the Department of the Missouri, on an expedition against the Cheyenne Indians in the Republican River region. His phenomenal sagacity as a buffalo hunter was recognized by the officers on this expedition, as he provided fresh meat for the company. Indians marveled at his superior skill. At nearly every shot he killed a buffalo, and on less than a half-mile run he killed thirty-six. That is, he was able to do alone what twenty Pawnees had accomplished together.

Old Freighting Days

The time of the old freighting days, as a phase of Nebraska history, is well portrayed in the life of Buffalo Bill. He was engaged as a "boy extra" in one of these caravans. There was a firm—a famous one in the western part of the United States—named Russell, Majors and Waddell, frontiersmen who had gradually built up a line of freight-wagons that went from St. Joseph, Missouri, to San Francisco, two thousand miles across the plains and mountains, carrying the freight that was shipped from the East to the West and bringing back freight from California to the East. These goods were packed in huge wagons with canvas tops, drawn sometimes by ten and sometimes even by twenty teams of oxen. There was so much danger in these trips from Indians and outlaws that they never started without several wagons in a caravan, with a guard of frontiersmen all armed and ready for attack from any source. At night they camped in certain places along the trail where there was water and, if

possible, wood. They cooked their own meals. They set up their own pickets and guards, and started on again the next morning to another camp. The journey took about a month; and time and again the whole outfit would fail to appear at the other end. It had been attacked and all the men killed by Indians, or by the robbers of the plains. And sometimes the next caravan would find remnants of the wagons and the dead bodies of men and oxen.

The wagons used in those days by Russell, Majors and Waddell were known as the "J. Murphy wagons," made at St. Louis especially for the plains business. They were very large and very strongly built, capable of carrying seven thousand pounds of freight each. The wagon boxes were very commodious, being as large as the rooms of an ordinary house, and were covered with two heavy canvas sheets to protect the merchandise from the rain. These wagons were generally sent out from Leavenworth, each loaded with six thousand pounds of freight, and each drawn by several yoke of oxen in charge of one driver. A train consisted of twenty-five wagons, all in charge of one man, who was known as wagon-master. Then came the "extra hand," next the night herder, and lastly the cattle driver, whose duty it was to drive the loose and lame cattle. There were thirty-one men, all told, in a train. In the work of cooking, the men were divided into messes of seven. One man cooked, another brought wood and water, another stood guard, each having some duty to perform while getting meals. All were armed with Colt's pistols and heavy rifles, and every one had his weapons handy, prepared for any emergency.

"The wagon-master, in the language of the plains, was called the 'bull-wagon boss'; the teamsters were

known as 'bull-whackers'; and the whole train was denominated a 'bull outfit. Everything at that time was called an 'outfit'."

"The trails to Salt Lake ran through Kansas north-westwardly, crossing the Big Blue River, then over the Big and Little Sandy, coming into Nebraska near the Big Sandy. The next stream of any importance was the Little Blue, along which the trail ran for sixty



Oregon Trail Monument, near Hebron

miles, then crossed a range of sand hills, and struck the Platte River ten miles below Fort Kearney; thence the course lay up the South Platte to the old Ash Hollow Crossing; thence eighteen miles across to the North Platte, near the mouth of the Blue Water, where General Harney had his great battle in 1855 with the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. From this point the North Platte was followed, passing Court House Rock, Chimney Rock, and Scott's Bluffs, and then on to Fort

Laramie, where the Laramie River was crossed. Still following the North Platte for a considerable distance, the trail crossed the river at Old Richard's Bridge, and followed it up to the celebrated Red Buttes, crossing the Willow Creeks to the Sweet Water, thence past the Cold Springs, where, three feet under the sod, on the hottest summer day, ice can be found; thence to the Hot Springs and the Rocky Ridge, and

through the Rocky Mountains and Echo Canyon, and thence on to the great Salt Lake Valley."

We next find Buffalo Bill as a Pony Express Rider. From his own writings we quote the following:

"The firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, who have already been mentioned, increased in importance because they were the only men who carried out successfully on a large scale the business of transporting freight across the desert and the mountains to California. But as California grew—and it grew very fast in a few years—there came a demand for a speedier method of communication between the western frontier in the East and the eastern frontier in the West. The great freight transporters, therefore, conceived the idea of getting up a scheme for carrying a few letters at a much faster rate from St. Joseph to San Francisco by means of a single horseman riding a pony at full speed. Their idea was that a man should mount a swift pony, well tried for his endurance before starting; that this man should ride straight out into the desert, and that at the end of fifteen miles there should be a station—that is, a house with a couple of men in it, who would have another pony ready. Here the horseman was to jump to the ground with his bag of letters, immediately mount a fresh pony, and rush along another fifteen miles to a similar station. Some of these stations were in settlements, some were in towns, but most of them were on the bleak prairies or in the hills of the Rocky Mountains. The trail was the same as that used by the freight bull trains. The bull train stations were of course used, but it was necessary to increase the number of stations. Some of the divisions were longer than others. But the average was a distance of forty-five miles; that is, the man who rode one of these divisions of the two thousand miles, rode

fifteen miles on one pony, fifteen miles on the second, and fifteen miles on the third. Then he began his return trip of forty-five miles. The longest division was two hundred and fifty miles. The men received about one hundred and twenty dollars a month, which was very high pay. But this gave the promoters of the scheme their choice among the best men of the frontier.

“No rider was allowed to carry more than twenty pounds in his mail bag. The bags were water-proof, and once locked at St. Joseph, Missouri, they were not opened until they were delivered in Sacramento, California, two thousand miles away. The first trip was started on the third of April, 1860. The journey took ten days for the two thousand miles. But in a short time the average trip was made regularly in nine days, and the fastest trip was made when President Lincoln’s inaugural address was carried over the two thousand miles in seven days and seventeen hours.” (The Adventures of Buffalo Bill, by William F. Cody.)

The Overland Stage

After the Civil War, Buffalo Bill drove the famous



Old Overland Coach, property of the late Hon. J. Sterling Morton, Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City.

overland stage, which ran from St. Joseph to Sacramento, doing the two thousand miles in nineteen days on the average. His run in Nebraska was from Fort Kearney to Plum Creek, and he drove six horses.

“This stage was another of the enterprises of the great firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell. It was a difficult enterprise, too.

The stage often carried large sums of money, and was therefore frequently held up by desperadoes or Indians.

“No one seemed very anxious to undertake the work of driver, although it was well paid. And the now famous Indian scout saw his opportunity again of making relatively large sums of money by taking risks that few others would take. He started driving the coach for what was called a division—that is, two hundred and fifty miles.

“Those were strange old coaches. The old Deadwood coach has been one of the most attractive features of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. They were large-wheeled wagons swung on braces. They had to be strong, for they went over the most frightful roads one can imagine. Passengers could ride inside or on top, and every one who travelled went as fully armed as he could. There never was a time in the night or day when the coach was not apt to be attacked, and if it was attacked, the man on the box was the first one shot.”

One of these stage coaches, in a fine state of preservation, was brought to Nebraska City, as the property of the Hon. J. Sterling Morton, where it has attracted much interest. It had been in use more than a third of a century on the regular stage routes when it was brought to Nebraska City, and its running-gear was in perfect condition. It was attacked by Indians in the Blue Valley, in 1864.

A shaft of red granite at Hebron, Nebraska, bears the following inscription: “Oregon Trail, from Independence and Westport (Kansas City) Missouri, to the Columbia River, route trail of the trappers and traders as early as 1830. A main road to the gold fields and western military posts. The path of the Pony Express

and the Overland Stage, gradually superseded by railroads throughout its course. Erected May, 1915, by the state of Nebraska, county of Thayer, citizens of Hebron, and Oregon Trail chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution."

Industries

Nebraska may be divided into three parts in regard to its industries, although the divisions cannot be regarded as stable. In the East we find diversified farming, stock raising, fruit growing and manufacturing. In the middle part, we have diversified farming, stock raising, and less fruit growing. In the West, on the High Plains, we have the ranching.

In 1904 a homestead law, known as the Kinkaid Act, was passed by Congress for the benefit of the homesteader in the semi-arid portion—the sand hills and high plains—of Nebraska. It allows him to make an entry for 640 acres of land, instead of for 160 acres as formerly, the land to be as compact in form as possible and not to exceed two miles in length. There are excluded from the provisions of the act such lands as in the opinion of the Secretary of the Interior may be reasonably practicable for irrigation by means of water conducted from natural streams, under the national irrigation law, or by private enterprise, particularly along the North Platte River. Thus the homesteader makes up in quantity of land for what the soil lacks in quality and productiveness. Here the farmer must depend almost entirely upon grazing and stock raising. "The use of windmills may enable him to grow a garden and perhaps a few acres of field products in some favorable location on his claim, but in the main his dependence must be upon utilizing the natural sparse growth of grass." In thirty-four west-

ern and northwestern counties the land is more or less rough and sandy, suitable to grazing, and the Kinkaid Act applies to such parts of them as were unreserved. The natural drawbacks to these lands for 160-acre homesteads, as originally planned, were the semi-arid conditions, the impossibility of reclaiming by irrigation on account of the lack of water supply and the great elevation, ranging from 2000 feet at the eastern limit of the area to 5000 feet or more at the western limit, and being far above the level of the streams.

As one would expect, the distribution of population corresponds to that of the industries. All the cities are found in the eastern part, or Loess Region. There are growing towns on the High Plains, but no towns deserving the name of cities are found in the Sand Hills or Bad Lands.

For convenience of study, the state may be divided by the 100th meridian into two rainfall belts, the section on the east receiving more than twenty-one inches of rainfall; and on the west, less than twenty-one inches, or less than the minimum amount for agriculture. But the boundaries of all the regions mentioned,—industries, population, and rainfall—are rapidly shifting. Irrigation is bringing about a transformation in the dry regions. The needed moisture has come, and the soil has not been found wanting. The Federal irrigation scheme, completed in 1911, embraces 110,000 acres in the arid region of Nebraska and Wyoming.

Dry Farming

Nebraska may be regarded as the home of dry farming, inasmuch as Mr. H. W. Campbell, the man for whom the Campbell method of soil culture was named, was a resident of Lincoln, Nebraska. Dry farming keeps the moisture in the soil by preventing it from

passing off into the atmosphere by evaporation. After each important rain during the season, the surface is harrowed. Many countries in the world have adopted the system of dry farming. This system is doing much to reclaim, without irrigation, the territory west of the 97th meridian which was once known as The Great American Desert. H. W. Campbell taught that if the soil is tilled intensively, twelve inches of moisture are sufficient in the semi-arid portions of the United States to produce crops. Yet over a very large portion of this region of America the annual precipitation exceeds fourteen inches.

Mountains in Nebraska

In so far as altitude and prominence of elevations make mountains, Nebraska may be said to contain them. In the High Plains regions there are remarkable groups of hundreds of buttes. These are remnants of a great ancient table-land. They were left standing after the table-land was eroded. The deep valleys between them are called canyons, and the buttes, mountains. "The largest buttes occur in Pine Ridge and in Wild Cat Range, where the country is of mountain altitude and scenery," (Condra's Geography of Nebraska.) Pine Ridge, an eroded portion of the High Plains containing numerous buttes, extends through the three northwestern counties of the state. The Wild Cat Range occurs in Scotts Bluff County. The buttes in these and other ranges are between 4000 and 5000 feet high. When we consider their altitude and how conspicuously they tower above the plains, we may consider the country as truly mountainous as many parts of the Appalachian highland.

The Steam Wagon Road

In Nebraska City there stands a monument, unveiled by the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1914, to mark the starting point of the old steam wagon road. The monument, which is a large boulder, bears this inscription upon a large tablet:

Steam Wagon
Invented and Owned
by Joseph R. Brown of Minnesota.
Manufactured
by John A. Reed of New York.
Landed at Nebraska City
From Steamer West Wind July 12, 1862.
Started for Denver self-propelled
July 22, 1862.
Disabled and Abandoned Seven Miles out.

This inscription is the story in brief of the Prairie Motor that was hailed with wild enthusiasm by the citizens of Nebraska City when it started, drawing three road wagons crowded with excited citizens, enroute for Denver. There were at the time five regular stage routes between the Missouri River and Denver, all of them meeting at Fort Kearney, and the introduction of steam was to revolutionize the slow and expensive "teaming" on the prairie road. Financial support was lacking to push the steam wagon project to success.



Monument at Nebraska City to mark the starting place of the old Steam Wagon Road.

Location of the Capital

There is something bordering on tragedy in that portion of the history of Nebraska which relates to the

location of both the Territorial and the State capitals. The strife among the rival towns and the grief over defeat caused wounds that seemed slow to heal. When the first Territorial governor, Francis Burt of South Carolina, arrived in Nebraska, Bellevue was the only settlement worthy of the name of village. It was the official headquarters, and he was entertained at the Mission House, which had been established here for the Oto and Omaha Indians (1846). Two days after his arrival, the governor died from the effects of the overland trip. His was to have been the difficult task of selecting the site for a territorial capital. Bellevue, with its favorable location near the Missouri and the Platte and its early settlement, had every reason to expect the prize. Its rivals were Florence, Omaha, Plattsmouth and Nebraska City. The excitement, increased largely by land speculators, was intense. Omaha was especially aggressive, and it was chosen by Acting Governor Cuming as the place for the meeting of the first territorial legislature (1855). Omaha was further favored and its future assured when, in 1863, the President of the United States named that point as the starting place for the Union Pacific Railroad, which was to follow the Platte westward. It would then become the great gateway for emigrants.

“The Bellevue of today, in size and condition, suffices only to illustrate the truth that mere righteousness and beauty are not in the reckoning against western hustle, with all that it implies. The original mis-



Statue of Abraham Lincoln, State House Grounds, Lincoln, Neb. Dedicated Labor Day, Sept. 2d, 1912.

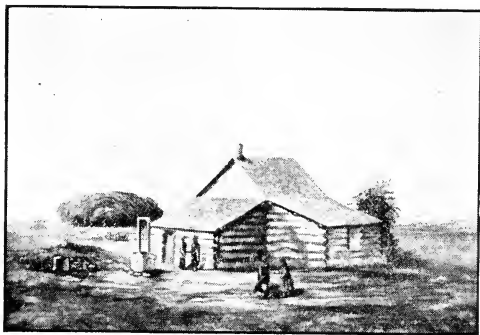
sionary's residence and the building which was occupied by the Indian agency are still standing, the first on the edge of the plateau immediately overlooking the river. The first church (Presbyterian) and the residences of Chief Justice Fenner Ferguson and Augustus Hall are still standing and in use. The natural townsite of Bellevue comprises a level plateau of about 3000 acres in the angle between the Missouri River and Papillion Creek. It rises on the north to a high hill which seems to have been especially designed by nature for the capitol of the commonwealth. The eminence is fittingly crowned by the main building of Bellevue College." (Morton's History.)

There was bitter sectional strife in Nebraska in territorial days between the country north of the Platte and that to the south. The South Platte country attempted to secede and become annexed to Kansas. A bill was also introduced in the Kansas legislature in 1858, making the Platte River the northern boundary of that territory. The annexation schemes in both states ended in 1860.

Removal of the Capital

When the twelfth and last legislature met in Omaha in January, 1867, the Territory became a State, and at the same time the capital was moved from Omaha to Lincoln, which was then only a mark on the map. Men seemed to follow visions in those days, so to speak. Owing to the spread of population westward, there was good reason for the change. "Lincoln succeeded his great rival, Douglas, in national political leadership." (Omaha is situated in Douglas county.) In spite of the fact that \$130,000 had been expended for the State House at Omaha on Capitol Hill, the removal took place. The townsite of Lancaster, in the

midst of the unbroken prairies, was renamed Lincoln, an illustrious name for a place of two stores and a half dozen houses. "The first domicile (1863) was built by Luke Laven-



Luke Lavendar's Log Cabin, Lincoln

dar, which stood near the corner of what is now O and 15th streets." The State capitol stands on the grounds of the old Lavendar homestead. Lincoln is situated on Salt Creek, and the numerous salt basins in the vicinity caused the friends of the new capital to predict that salt would become a source of revenue to the city. By the end of the year 1868 the State House at Lincoln had been partially erected, and Governor Butler "issued a proclamation announcing the removal of the seat of

government to Lincoln, and ordered the transfer of the archives of the State to the new Capital." In two years more, buildings were completed for a State University and an asylum for the insane. The Burlington and Missouri River Railroad had reached Lincoln, and the population of the town had become 2500.

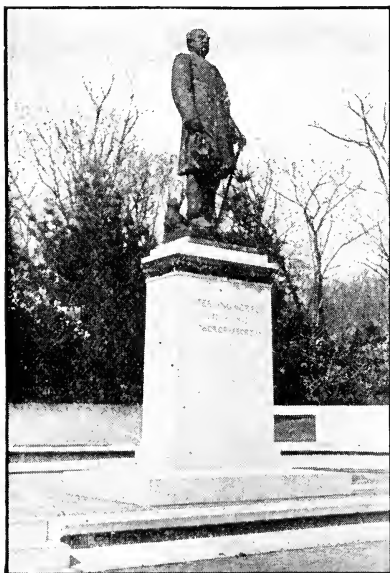
Two thriving cities, with interests still unlike, as might be anticipated from the nature of their beginnings, are to be seen in Lincoln, the capital, and Omaha, the metropolis. At



David Butler

First Governor of Nebraska under State Government, and one of the Commissioners who located the Capital at Lincoln.

Omaha fourteen trunk lines of railroad meet. Smelters, meat-packing houses, (South Omaha) and factories give the city its prominence. Lincoln, from the very beginning, when Elder Young (1863) and his colony chose the site for the location of an academy, has attracted schools. Three universities and several colleges are in the vicinity. The atmosphere of a college town will probably overshadow its commercial importance, although its prosperity is assured by the fine farming country about it.



Statue of J. Sterling Morton, the father of Arbor Day, erected at Morton Park, Nebraska City, by the Arbor Day Memorial Association, 1905. Dedicated by Ex-President Grover Cleveland and the surviving members of his Cabinet. Legends appearing on the monument: "Plant Trees. Love of Home is Primary Patriotism. Other Holidays repose upon the Past. Arbor Day proposes for the Future." The sculptor was Rudolph Evans.

Nebraska the Home of Arbor Day

The story of Nebraska would not be complete without its crowning achievement, the founding of Arbor Day. That a prairie state should have led in the march of the tree planters is only another proof of the old adage, that the best teacher one can have is necessity. Whether the prairie had been always treeless, or whether the seasonal fires had prevented the spread of the forest beyond the edge of the rivers, is not known. But of one thing we are certain beyond a doubt, name-

ly, that these broad, rolling lands afford an ideal home for trees, not only for those planted by man, but for the wind-blown seeds that have crowned the hills with oaks and elms.

To this treeless prairie state the founder of Arbor Day, J. Sterling Morton, came from Michigan as a young pioneer in 1854, and by word and deed preached the gospel of planting trees. He succeeded in having the State Board of Agriculture set apart an "Arbor Day" in 1872, and on that single day, we are told, one million trees were set out in Nebraska. Many trees stand today, planted by his own hand at Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City, to prove that this prairie state could bounteously nourish and rear trees of many climes. His coat-of-arms and his watchword became "Plant Trees." The father of Arbor Day became national Secretary of Agriculture in 1893, and the holiday, made legal in Nebraska in 1885, falls upon April 22d, his birthday.

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them,—ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest, solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influences,
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place,
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty. —*Bryant.*

The Prairies

These are the Gardens of the Desert, these
 The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
 For which the speech of England has no name—
 The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
 And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
 Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch
 In airy undulations, far away,
 As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
 Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
 And motionless forever.—Motionless?—
 No—they are all unchained again. The clouds
 Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,
 The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;
 Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase
 The sunny ridges. Breezes of the South!
 Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
 And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on high,
 Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not—ye have played
 Among the palms of Mexico and vines
 Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid brooks
 That from the fountains of Sonora glide
 Into the calm Pacific—have ye fanned
 A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?

, * * * * *

Still this great solitude is quick with life.
 Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers
 They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,
 And birds, that scarce have learned the fear of man,
 Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground,
 Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer
 Bounds to the wood at my approach. The bee,
 A more adventurous colonist than man,
 With whom he came across the eastern deep,

Fills the savannas with his murmurings,
And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,
Within the hollow oak. I listen long
To his domestic hum, and think I hear
The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain
Over the dark-brown furrows. All at once
A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,
And I am in the wilderness alone.

—*Bryant.*

Some Interesting Facts

Nebraska was organized as a territory in 1854.

Was admitted to the Union in 1867.

It contains 76,808 square miles and approximates 50,000,000 acres.

The average Nebraska farm is 297.8 acres.

The total population of the state in 1910 was 1,192,214 of which, according to government statistics, approximately 888,000 are rural and 310,000 urban. Fifty years ago there were few white settlers.

For the support of the public schools the state has \$9,747,616.65 of permanent productive funds and 1,900,-625 acres of school lands.

Nebraska ranks:

- 3 in production of hay.
- 4 in production of wheat.
- 5 in production of corn.
- 12 in milch cows.
- 3 in other cattle.
- 4 in value of swine.
- 6 in value of horses.
- 3 in wealth per capita of rural population.
- 5 in value of four leading crops.
- 13 in rural population.

Nebraska has the largest creamery in the world and Omaha is the largest creamery butter producing city in the world and produces butter rivaling the famous butter of Denmark. Nebraska has the largest horse market in the United States, and the largest sheep feeding market in the world.

Nebraska Produced in 1915

Potatoes.....	\$ 6,000,000	Vegetables....	\$ 20,000,000
Fresh Fruit....	24,000,000	Barley.....	1,000,000
Rye.....	2,000,000	Oats.....	28,000,000
Wheat.....	78,000,000	Corn ..	102,000,000
Apples.....	1,000,000	Sugar.....	5,000,000
Eggs.....	15,000,000	Poultry.....	7,000,000
Dairy Products	40,000,000	Mutton.....	3,000,000
Beef	92,000,000	Pork	100,000,000

—From *Nebraska Educational Bulletin, Semi-Centennial Celebration*, issued by State Department of Public Instruction.

INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES—*Continued*

- *87 American Inventors—II (Morse and Edison)—*Paris*
- *88 American Naval Heroes (Jones, Perry, Farragut)—*Bush*
- 89 Fremont and Kit Carson—*Judd*
- *91 Story of Eugene Field—*McCabe*
- *178 Story of Lexington and Bunker Hill—*Baker*
- *182 Story of Joan of Arc—*McFee*
- *207 Famous Artists—II—Reynolds and Murillo—*Cranston*
- *243 Famous Artists—III—Millet
- *248 Makers of European History

Literature

- *90 Fifteen Selections from Longfellow—(Village Blacksmith, Children's Hour, and others)
- *95 Japanese Myths and Legends
- 103 Stories from the Old Testament
- *111 Water Babies (Abridged)
- *171 Tolmi of the Treetops—*Grimes*
- *172 Labu the Little Lake Dweller
- *173 Tara of the Tents—*Grimes*
- *195 Night before Christmas and Other Christmas Poems and Stories (Any Grade)
- *201 Alice's First Adventures in Wonderland
- *202 Alice's Further Adventures in Wonderland—*Carroll*
- *256 Bolo the Cave Boy—*Grimes*
- *262 Kwasa the Cliff Dweller—*Grimes*

FIFTH GRADE

Nature and Industry

- *92 Animal Life in the Sea—*McFee*
- *93 Story of Silk—*Brown*
- *94 Story of Sugar—*Reiter*
- *96 What We Drink (Tea, Coffee and Cocoa)
- *139 Peeps into Bird Nooks—II
- 210 Snowdrops and Crocuses
- 263 The Sky Family—*Denton*
- *280 Making of the World—*Herndon*
- *281 Builders of the World—*Herndon*
- *283 Stories of Time—*Bush*

History and Biography

- *16 Explorations of the Northwest
- 80 Story of the Cabots—*McBride*
- *97 Story of the Norsemen—*Hanson*
- 98 Story of Nathan Hale—*McCabe*
- 99 Story of Jefferson—*McCabe*
- 100 Story of Bryant—*McFee*
- 101 Story of Robert E. Lee—*McKane*
- 105 Story of Canada—*McCabe*
- *106 Story of Mexico—*McCabe*
- *107 Story of Robert Louis Stevenson
- 110 Story of Hawthorne—*McFee*
- 112 Biographical Stories—*Hawthorne*
- 141 Story of Grant—*McKane*
- *144 Story of Steam—*McCabe*
- 145 Story of McKinley—*McBride*
- 157 Story of Dickens—*Smith*
- *179 Story of the Flag—*Baker*
- *185 Story of the First Crusade
- 190 Story of Father Hennepin
- 191 Story of LaSalle—*McBride*
- *217 Story of Florence Nightingale
- *218 Story of Peter Cooper—*McFee*
- 232 Story of Shakespeare—*Grimes*
- *265 Four Little Discoverers in Panama—*Bush*
- *287 Life in Colonial Days—*Tillinghast*

Literature

- *8 King of the Golden River—*Ruskin*
- *9 The Golden Touch—*Hawthorne*
- *61 Story of Sindbad the Sailor
- *108 History in Verse (Sheridan's Ride, Independence Bell, the Blue and the Gray, etc.)
- *113 Little Daffydownilly and Other Stories—*Hawthorne*
- *180 Story of Aladdin and of Ali Baba
- *183 A Dog of Flanders—*De La Ramée*
- *184 The Nurnberg Stove—*La Ramée*
- *186 Heroes from King Arthur—*Graves*
- 194 Whittier's Poems—Selected.

- *199 Jackanapes—*Ewing*
- *200 The Child of Urbino—*La Ramée*
- *208 Heroes of Asgard—Selections—*Keary*
- *212 Stories from Robin Hood—*Bush*
- *234 Poems Worth Knowing—Book II—Intermediate—*Faxon*
- 255 Chinese Fables and Stories

SIXTH GRADE

Nature and Industry

- *109 Gifts of the Forests (Rubber, Cinchona, Resins, etc.)—*McFee*
- 249 Flowers and Birds of Illinois—*Patterson*

Geography

- *114 Great European Cities—I (London and Paris)—*Bush*
- *115 Great European Cities—II (Rome and Berlin)—*Bush*
- *168 Great European Cities—III (St. Petersburg and Constantinople)—*Bush*
- *246 What I Saw in Japan—*Griffis*
- *247 The Chinese and Their Country
- *285 Story of Panama and the Canal—*Nida*

History and Biography

- *73 Four Great Musicians—*Bush*
- *74 Four More Great Musicians
- *116 Old English Heroes (Alfred, Richard the Lion-Hearted, The Black Prince)—*Bush*
- *117 Later English Heroes (Cromwell, Wellington, Gladstone)
- *160 Heroes of the Revolution
- *163 Stories of Courage—*Bush*
- 187 Lives of Webster and Clay
- *188 Story of Napoleon—*Bush*
- *189 Stories of Heroism—*Bush*
- 197 Story of Lafayette—*Bush*
- 198 Story of Roger Williams—*Leighton*
- *209 Lewis and Clark Expedition
- *224 Story of William Tell—*Hatlock*
- 253 Story of the Aeroplane—*Galtbreath*
- *266 Story of Belgium—*Griffis*
- 267 Story of Wheels—*Bush*
- *286 Story of Slavery—*Booker T. Washington*

Stories of the States

- 508 Story of Florida—*Brauskett*
- 509 Story of Georgia—*Derry*
- 511 Story of Illinois—*Smith*
- 512 Story of Indiana—*Clem*
- 513 Story of Iowa—*McFee*
- 515 Story of Kentucky—*Eubank*
- 520 Story of Michigan—*Skinner*
- 521 Story of Minnesota—*Skinner*
- 523 Story of Missouri—*Pierce*
- *528 Story of New Jersey—*Hutchinson*
- 533 Story of Ohio—*Galtbreath*
- *536 Story of Pennsylvania—*March*
- 540 Story of Tennessee—*Overall*
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(Continued on Next Page)

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